

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7636

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

USMISSION USUN

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 0691

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP MR AG UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS ON SAHARA AND RELATIONS WITH
MOROCCO

1. DURING MY FAREWELL CALL FEB. 5, SOVIET AMBASSADOR GORUNOV
COMMENTED ON SAHARA AND SOVIET RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO. IN
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REPLY TO MY REMARK THAT RECENT ARAB EMISSARIES HAD BEEN

STRUCK BY NUMEROUS SOVIET AIRCRAFT AT ALGIERS AIRPORT, SOVIET AMB EXPRESSED OPINION THAT EMISSARIES COULD NOT HAVE DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN SOVIET AIRCRAFT STOPPING IN ALGIERS AND THOSE TRANSITING ON THEIR WAY TO ANGOLA (SOVIET AMB, SPEAKING RUSSIAN, USED WORD "ANGOLA," BUT HIS INTERPRETER TRANSLATED IT AS "ELSEWHERE"). SOVIET AMB ADDED THAT SOVIETS DELIVERING ARMS TO ALGERIA, BUT NOT BEYOND QUANTITIES ANTICIPATED SOME TIME AGO.

2. SOVIET AMB THEN ASKED ABOUT US ARMS DELIVERIES TO MOROCCO, REFERRING TO RECENT REPORT THAT US MILITARY AID HAD BEEN "DOUBLED." HE SAID ALGERIAN INTERPRETATION OF STATE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT AFTER LAMRANI MEETING WITH SECRETARY WAS THAT U.S. PROVIDING UNCONDITIONAL AND LIMITLESS AID TO MOROCCO. I RESPONDED THAT THIS INTERPRETATION ENTIRELY INCORRECT. UNCONDITIONAL, LIMITLESS ASSISTANCE NOT POSSIBLE UNDER U.S. SYSTEM, WITH CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL REQUIRED, I EXPLAINED. I ALSO RECALLED THAT USG HAD SENT MILITARY SURVEY TEAM HERE IN LATE 1973 WHICH HAD OUTLINED A MODEST MILITARY SUPPLY PROGRAM FOR MOROCCO WHICH WE HAD BEEN PURSUING STEADILY WITHOUT ANY SUDDEN SURGES. AS FOR REPORTED "DOUBLING" OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE, I CLARIFIED THAT THIS RELATED ONLY TO INCREASE

OF CREDIT PORTION OF MILITARY SALES, WHICH RELATIVELY SMALL PART OF TOTAL PROGRAM, AND THAT TOTAL HAD NOT BEEN ALTERED. SOVIET AMB EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS EXPLANATION, STATING THAT HE HAD NOT UNDERSTOOD SITUATION.

3. SOVIET AMB WENT ON TO UNDERLINE THAT USSR HAD NO DESIRE TO SEE INCREASED TENSIONS IN NORTH AFRICA. HE IMPLIED THAT US-SOVIET DIFFERENCES ON ANGOLA DID NOT BEAR ON THIS REGION. ARABS HAD ENOUGH PROBLEMS WITH ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE DRAGGING ON, HE ARGUED. ALGERIAN SUPPORT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION, IN HIS VIEW, WAS ENTIRELY UNDERSTANDABLE IN LIGHT OF THIRD WORLD CONCERN FOR THIS WIDELY-ACCEPTED PRINCIPLE. ASKED FOR EXPLANATION OF CURRENT US POLICY, I STRESSED THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE MOROCCAN/ALGERIAN DIFFERENCES SETTLED BY THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE, ALSO EXPRESSING VIEW THAT MOROCCO ACQUISITION OF PORTION OF SAHARA HAD NOT CHANGED BASIC BALANCE IN AREA.

4. CONCERNING SOVIET/MOROCCAN BILATERAL RELATIONS, SOVIET AMB CHARACTERIZED THESE AS "GOOD." WHILE THERE HAD BEEN SOME
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DETERIORATION BECAUSE OF "PROPAGANDA," KING'S PRESS CONFERENCE OF NOVEMBER 25, IN WHICH KING HAD MINIMIZED DIFFERENCES WITH USSR, HAD BEEN "HELPFUL." SOVIET BILATERAL AID AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AS WELL AS MOROCCAN EXPORTS TO USSR, WERE CONTINUING WITH SLIGHT INCREASES. ONLY INTERRUPTION HAD BEEN IN NEGOTIATIONS ON SOVIET CONSTRUCTION OF PHOSPHATE-FERTILIZER PLANT, FOR WHICH MOROCCANS HAD TAKEN INITIATIVE BECAUSE OF SAHARA PROBLEM. INASMUCH AS THIS PROJECT HIGHLY BENEFICIAL FOR MOROCCO, SOVIETS EXPECTED

GOM TO TAKE IT UP AGAIN AND WERE READY TO LOOK UPON SUCH A MOROCCAN INITIATIVE WITH FAVOR, SOVIET AMB STATED.

5. I ASKED WHETHER RECENTLY ANNOUNCED SOVIET/ALGERIAN ACCORDS FOR EXPLOITATION OF GARA DJEBILET IRON ORE HAD A POLITICAL ASPECT. SOVIET AMB RESPONDED THAT HIS COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR HAD INFORMED HIM THAT USSR HAD BEEN WORKING ON THIS AGREEMENT FOR PAST SEVEN YEARS. AS FOR POLITICAL ASPECT, SOVIET EMBASSY HAD INQUIRED OF MOSCOW, BUT HAD RECEIVED NO ANSWER, HE SAID. IN ANY CASE, HE ADDED, MOROCCO/ALGERIA BORDER WAS DRAWN, DESPITE FACT THAT 1972 BORDER AND ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS NOT RATIFIED. LATEST SOVIET-ALGERIAN ACCORDS, HE ASSERTED, WERE BASED ON POSSIBILITY 1972 AGREEMENTS MIGHT STILL BE RATIFIED AND THEREFORE LEFT ROOM FOR ANY FUTURE ALGERIAN/MOROCCAN COOPERATION IN THIS AREA WHICH MIGHT BE AGREED UPON.

6. COMMENT: SOVIET AMB WAS OBVIOUSLY AT PAINS TO PORTRAY SOVIET POLICY TOWARD MOROCCO AND ALGERIAN AS RELATIVELY EVENHANDED, UNPROVOCATIVE AND COOPERATIVE. DESPITE HIS LOW KEY APPROACH HERE AND STRESS ON BUSINESS AS USUAL, SOVIETS HAVE BEEN STEADILY LOSING PUBLIC RELATIONS GROUND WITH MOROCCAN OFFICIAL AND GENERAL OPINION. AT SAME TIME, SLIGHT INCREASES IN SOVIET AID AND MOROCCAN EXPORTS INDICATE SOVIETS ALSO ENGAGED IN MORE CONCRETE DAMAGE-LIMITING EFFORTS. MEANWHILE MOROCCANS SEEM TO BE KEEPING OPEN POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVED RELATIONS AS INDUCEMENT TO SOVIETS NOT TO OVERDO SUPPORT FOR ALGERIANS.
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